

THE OROKAIVA PEOPLE

Provenance

- 174. It is only by wide research among the near and distant neighbours of a people that we are likely to form a correct opinion of their provenance. The present writer cannot claim to have made any such research, and therefore no definite hypothesis will be attempted. The internal evidence (as we might call it) is not altogether straightforward. The legends for the most part (though not invariably) point to the Waria and the Gira as the original home of the people; and the general similarity between the Orokaiva and the present inhabitants of the country immediately north of the boundary is quite in keeping with such a theory. But the historical evidence—if so we may call the more recent memories of tribal feuds, dispersals, and migrations—would seem to indicate a movement from the opposite direction. While it is evident that tribal affairs have been involved in a veritable whirlpool of strife, migration, and counter-migration, there is nevertheless proof that certain large groups have pushed or have been pushed steadily northwards.¹

It may be that both these movements southward and northward have taken place. As a purely tentative suggestion it may be that the original Orokaiva population occupied the plain from the direction of the Waria and have since been subjected to a pressure from the south which has driven them back over their tracks. The presence of the bull-roarer and the sacred flute in the south and their gradual progress northwards would seem to indicate that a new culture at least, and perhaps some new people, had entered at the southern end of the plain and caused an ethnic backwash towards the north.

Rather against such an hypothesis is the presence of the bull-roarer and the sacred flute on the Waria itself, which might make it appear that the Binandele, Aiga, and Tain-Daware constituted an intrusive element who had driven the bull-roarer people out of their way. The general uniformity of custom and language, however, gives some

¹ See Chinnery and Beaver, *Annual Report*, 1914-15, Appendix II, p. 158.

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ground for assuming that the exceptions, viz. especially the bull-roarer and sacred flute, are later introductions. 174

The present report, which aims at describing the Orokaiva people alone, may proceed without pretending to solve this question. 000

Physical Characters

It remains to give some idea of the physical characteristics of the people with whom this report is to deal. To any one who has overcome the antipathy of mere strangeness the Orokaiva may well appear a handsome and prepossessing race. The best example will be a man of medium height, clean-limbed, muscular, and spare. The colour of the skin is predominantly darkish brown, though there is variation in both directions. The hair is of the woolly texture common to natives of Papua, and black in colour. The features are fairly clear-cut. The nose, usually straight, is not unduly broad in appearance and is often well defined. The brow ridge is somewhat marked and the jaws strong. The lips are sometimes full but not specially so. The mouth is commonly firm, and the face often shows deep lines. 142

In general appearance the Orokaiva may stand midway between the typical Papuan and the typical Melanesian. He has neither the prominent convex nose and the narrow forehead of the former, nor the broad and somewhat smooth countenance of the latter.

The results of measurements upon 81 individuals are given below. Of these 36 belonged to the Aiga tribe, 28 to Wasida, and 17 to Sangara. 141

Cephalic Indices.

General average: 74.2	{	Aiga	74.7
		Wasida	75.8
		Sangara	73.9

Extremes: 66.6-81.9.

Modes: 72.5 and 74.5.

Nasal Indices.

General average: 91.4	{	Aiga	89.1
		Wasida	92.7
		Sangara	94.2

Extremes: 70.4-110.6.

Modes: 88.9 and 100.1.